DRAFT/Suggested Remarks for Dr. Fletcher at Meeting with Aviation/Space Writers at Flight Research Center, Edwards, CA
June 14, 1973

I'm particularly pleased that you are able to visit our Flight Research Center today. I think you will find some of the things that we are doing to be most interesting.

It sometimes seems strange to me that in this day of mass communications, there are still a lot of people who just associate NASA with space activities and forget our involvement with aeronautical research. People tend to forget that as NACA, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, our involvement with airplanes dates back to World War I.

We have four of our field Centers who are actively involved with aeronautical research in one way or another. Each of these Centers has unique facilities that lend themselves to specializing in some particular facet of aeronautics.

Here at the Flight Research Center, we have concentrated on high speed flight work as well as some of our more unusual aircraft. When you look around you and see the vast dry lakebed, the absence of populated areas, and the excellent weather, you can understand our reasoning.

The Center, which celebrated its 25th Anniversary last fall, began with X-1 and has played an important role in the Experimental Aircraft program. As we continue our aeronautical research efforts, it becomes quite apparent that flight test, with the research pilot and his specially instrumented airplane, remains the ultimate tool in this business.

Another advantage we have here is our close association with the Air Force and members of the aerospace industry. A lot of our work conducted here is done jointly with the Air Force Flight Test Center. And of course, the military remains one of the biggest users of our aeronautical research efforts.

Today, you are going to see or hear about airplanes that cruise at speeds above Mach 3, airplanes that have new wing designs which increase their efficiency significantly, airplanes that have little or no wings at all, airplanes that have had their mechanical control system removed to evaluate improved electronic flight control systems of the future, and some airplanes that don't even have pilots in them when they fly.

Most of these programs will be continued here for the next several years. And, as you probably all know, the horizontal flight tests of the space shuttle orbiter will be conducted here. The Flight Research Center with all of its experience will play an important role in this program.